



Homeland
Security

JUL 09 2004

The Honorable Tom Tancredo
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Tancredo:

Thank you for your letter, cosigned by your congressional colleagues. I always welcome the opportunity to hear your views and support for our national immigration enforcement strategy. I know you share my concern about maintaining the integrity of our immigration laws and the importance of dismantling avenues and organizations that can be used by terrorists to gain illegal entry into the United States. The U.S. Border Patrol (BP) and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) play a key role in protecting the homeland and I fully support the men and women of these important agencies as they perform this critical mission every day.

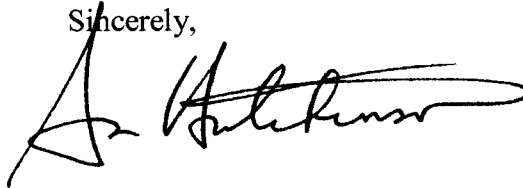
The recent enforcement activities in the Ontario, California area carried out by the Border Patrol's Temecula Station and its Mobile Patrol Group MPG, while within their legal authority, were not pre-approved in accordance with Customs and Border Protection (CBP) policy. CBP Commissioner Robert Bonner has reiterated this policy to all of the Border Patrol sector chiefs and has assured me that he has taken appropriate action to ensure the sectors and stations understand the policy. All Border Patrol operations have a clear border nexus and deal mostly with recent arrivals to the United States. Border Patrol operations also target transportation hubs that facilitate the continuing illegal entry of aliens.

Sustained interior enforcement actions will be conducted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), perhaps with the assistance of the Border Patrol. It is important to note that immigration enforcement activities conducted by agencies within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) will continue, but the operations impact other costs associated with detention and removal. For example, last year ICE detained approximately 211,000 aliens and removed approximately 144,000 aliens at a rough cost of \$800M. These are direct costs and do not include headquarters overhead, additional immigration lawyers and judges, etc. The additional cost to detain and remove an additional 444,000 aliens would require additional resources of \$1.3B assuming the national detention infrastructure can support this requirement.

I will continue to evaluate the resources needed to support our detention and removal responsibilities and seek your continued support in this endeavor. The President's FY05 Budget would increase funding for ICE's interior enforcement efforts by approximately \$100M.

While the Department of Homeland Security must prevent terrorists and instruments of terrorism from entering the United States, we must also enforce the immigration laws of the United States. I assure you that we will enforce these laws in a reasonable manner with consideration for the sensitivities associated with interior enforcement and within the funding allocations legislated by the U.S. Congress. Thank you for your interest and support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Asa Hutchinson', with a stylized, sweeping flourish at the end.

Asa Hutchinson
Under Secretary
Border and Transportation Security